



# Rancho Simi Trailblazers

*A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation*



Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District events can be viewed at [www.rsrpd.org](http://www.rsrpd.org)

~~~ Welcome New Members John Baxter and Ingrid Armstrong ~~~

**!!! Hiker Alert: All hikes, work parties and meetings have been cancelled until further notice due to the COVID-19 "Stay Well at Home" orders !!!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Due to unforeseen circumstances, all activities are subject to change without notice. Please see <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> for event details and the most up-to-date schedule.

\* Not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.



The RANCHO SIMI TRAIL BLAZERS are looking for leaders for public hikes! If interested, please contact Michael Kuhn at [mike.kuhn@simitrailblazers.com](mailto:mike.kuhn@simitrailblazers.com). Applicants must be evaluated by the board and would be subject to the park district's standard background check.



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## HIKE REPORTS

February 29, 2020 – Happy Camp Canyon and Middle Range Fire Road Loop



## February 29, 2020 – Happy Camp Canyon and Middle Range Fire Road Loop - continued

23 hikers met in the dirt parking lot at the east end of Broadway Road north of Moorpark on a sunny morning with a pretty blue and white-cloud-dotted sky. After a group photo was taken, we followed a well-maintained trail beside the Rustic Canyon golf course a little over a mile to the entrance to Happy Camp Canyon, "a lush riparian oak woodland with an intermittent stream," enjoying a lovely display of lush green grass and wildflowers including fiddleneck, purple nightshade, collar and bush lupine, bush sunflowers, blue dicks, bladderpod, California peony, wishbone, datura, prickly phlox, owl's clover and California poppies.

Although the landscape was lush, the "stream" was absent due to the lack of recent rain. Passing the junction with the west end of the Middle Range Fire Road, we followed an old ranch road eastward as it gradually rose 600' in the canyon bottom between Oak Ridge and Big Mountain. At 4.8 miles we took a break in an oak grove with picnic tables and hitching rails.

We then split into two groups; one group returned to the parking lot the way we had come; the other group climbed steeply for 0.5 mile up Big Mountain to the Middle Range Fire Road via an abandoned, steep and partially eroded dirt connector road. Once we reached the ridge (and recovered from the steep climb) we took in the views to the south and west which were relatively clear for several miles, but were hazy at greater distances (for example, we couldn't see any of the Channel Islands). After hiking westward while enjoying blooming plants including large swatches of Fiddleneck, California poppies, and some beautiful Collar and Bush Lupine as we descended to the entrance to Happy Camp Canyon, we made our way back to the parking lot. The group that chose to hike the loop completed an 11-mile hike with 1,543' of elevation gain/loss. The group that chose the out-and-back option completed a 9.8-mile mile with 985' of elevation gain/loss. It was indeed a very nice day for hiking.

## March 7, 2020 – Ahmanson Ranch: El Escorpion Park, Cave of Munits, Castle Peak



15 hikers met at the El Escorpion Park entrance (905') at the west end of Vanowen Street in the San Fernando Valley on a cool partially overcast late-winter morning. We began our hike into the Simi Hills along the Hunter Allen Trail (aka Moore Canyon Road), a wide dirt road with no shade, but soon turned right/north on a "use" trail which led down to a heavily shaded "use" trail that led us westward parallel to (but out of sight of) the dirt road. We eventually reached the well-defined "use" trail leading north up to the entrance to the Cave of Munits.

Upon reaching the vertical cave entrance, most of the group decided to climb steeply up into the cave. Doing so required the use of both hands and both feet (a short class 3 climb). As described on the excellent Modern Hiker web site, "The walls of the interior fold and undulate into a seemingly endless series of side caves and back caverns ... it's ceiling is very tall and it can feel like you're standing inside a natural rock cathedral ... this area was spiritually important to the Chumash (Indians)." After exploring the interior of the cave, most of the hikers exited by climbing out one of the cave's chimneys and carefully circling around on the mountainside back down to the cave's entrance; the other hikers returned the way they entered the cave. After regrouping, we headed southward down to the Hunter Allen Trail and followed it westward a short distance until it turned southward. At that point we continued westward along a trail/dirt road which we followed to another "use" trail that led us mostly northward past several oak trees and then steeply up a north-south ridge to the main east-west ridge (with Castle Peak at its east end). Our climb was aided by the mild temperature and occasional clouds; the trail was bordered by lots of blooming plants. Once up on the east-west ridge, we followed a mostly well-defined single track trail east to Castle Peak until it ended about 20' from the top of the peak. Along the way we were treated to wide views of the surrounding area as well as interesting rock formations. Most members of our group climbed up to the top of Castle Peak (1,475'). After resting for a while, we returned the way we came (passing by the Cave of Munits turnoff) and reached our vehicles having hiked 4.8 miles with a little over 1,200' of elevation gain/loss. NOTE: The blooming plants we saw were most notably fiddleneck, bush sunflowers and morning glories as well as blue dicks, prickly phlox, datura and lupine.

## CHUMASH USES OF WHITE SAGE

[The following information is summarized from Jan Timbrook, *Chumash Ethnobotany*, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (2007), pp. 185-186.]

White sage (*Salvia apiana*, *khapshikh* in the three major dialects of Chumash, including *Ventureño*) is the tallest of the native *Salvia* species in the Simi Valley area. It can be seen in abundance along the first several hundred feet of the Long Canyon Trail.

Unlike some other California Indians, none of John Peabody Harrington's Chumash consultants indicated that the Chumash gathered and ate the seed of this species. However, they did peel and eat the young tender growing stem tips. One informant said that a deer hunter would place the leaves in his mouth so that deer could not detect his presence. Another informant indicated that acorn granaries were lined with white sage leaves – perhaps thinking that the strong aromatic qualities would repel insects and other pests. Another informant indicated that placing leaves on top of one's head would cure a headache. Another suggested that adding pounded leaves to water and drinking it would induce vomiting. The Chumash thought that vomiting would purge the body and lead to improved health.

Present-day Chumash use white sage for purification purposes at ceremonies and general gatherings. In the spring, the growing ends of stems are collected and dried. Small bundles of stems with leaves are bound with yarn. When needed, the tips are set on fire. The flames are extinguished. The bundle tips continue to smolder. Participants bathe themselves in the smoke to promote spiritual balance and harmony. The bundle is then extinguished so that it can be reused. Sage bundles are often used as offerings and gifts. It should be noted that there is no mention of this practice by any of Harrington's consultants, so it may be a post-1900 invention.

Mike Kuhn

## A CHUMASH SHRINE AT VENTURA

The Chumash had many shrines. These sacred spots were where both private and public ceremonies would be performed. A known shrine in the Ventura area was located atop of the hill where the large cross is located north of the San Buenaventura City Hall. One of John Peabody Harrington's Chumash informants (Simp.) may have given the only firsthand account of what went on at the shrine. The following description provides some insights into what might have gone on at some of the shrines in the Simi Valley area. The following is taken from Harrington's notes written in his own hand:

"Inf. (informant) once went to ... shrine on the *cuchilla* (i.e., edge) of the point above Ventura. As soon as they reached the spot they started around it in a counter clockwise motion and went around 3 times. They wanted Simp. to go around with them but he objected. Then they tossed on the ground the *frijol* (kidney-beans), *trigo* (wheat), maiz (corn) and also the *cuentas* (beads) that they brought.

Where the shrine was level, not a slope, though the slope up which they had come was steep. Just as soon as they *dura mas. nesc. washiko* But thinks it must be the o.k. name. The sticks were not painted and of various diameters of 2" or so. The feathers were black and *formeda* (a drawing of the shape of the feathers) bunch 8" or 10" in diameter and very pretty. At center they pointed up. At sides drooped prettily. On some of the poles below the feathers bunch ....were hung by tying a string to the edge. The old ladies that went up there were 3 in number. They were Juliana and he forgets the other two. He went just that one time. It must have been at least 30 years ago. Expects you would find nothing left of it now.

Arrived they started around taking great care to go around it in a counter clockwise direction. Inf. forgets just how many *plumeros* there were. But they were arranged so as to form a circle. This circle was 15 feet across and marked only by the *palos* (poles). All inside and around outside was clear of weeds.

The *palos* were about 11 feet tall and inf. imagines they were of *palo colorado*....In the cleared space inside the circle were other areas *hiadas* (?) (in any position) and pieces of cloth, handkerchiefs, etc., beads and seeds."

Mike Kuhn

## ECHOS OF THE PAST

During the late-1970s, I conducted an archaeological walkover of a parcel of land that was proposed for development. (This was part of my job with the City of Simi Valley (the "City").) That parcel extended north from Royal Avenue to the Arroyo Simi, where Willowbrook Lane is now. It was a long narrow parcel with room for a street down the center and a row of single-family detached homes on each side. A little more than half way between Royal Avenue and the arroyo, I found evidence of a temporary camp of Indians as well as items from the historical period. I talked with the octogenarian daughter of the original owner of that ranch. She was still living in the ranch house on the property. She indicated to me that her parents had allowed a group of Chumash Indians to camp at that location during the fall for many years as late as the 1920s, while they gathered acorns in the valley. Could those Indians have been descendants of that band from Spring Canyon? Now we go forward to the 1980s.

During the early 1980s, the City was processing a specific plan for the development of Sand Canyon (Nothing became of that project. At least two more projects were reviewed by the City before the Big Sky Ranch saw development.). I visited the site in October, when the archaeological survey of the land by archaeologists employed by the firm that was preparing an environmental impact report for the project, was winding down. Three young women had shown up. They identified themselves as of Chumash descent and as being from Ventura. They were not "Native American monitors" and were not being employed by the archaeologist. They simply were interested in what had been found and seemed to have an open and excited appreciation for the land. In the interest of cooperating with the interests of the Native American community, I took them on a tour of the sites that had been found. As soon as I took them to a site at the northern end of the coast live oak grove that occupied the bottom of the canyon, they immediately spotted some trees that were laden with an abundant crop of acorns. With great excitement they asked if I thought it would be all right if they gathered acorns. They explained that each year at about that time Chumash women in their community, i.e., Ventura, participated in some sort of public event or parade. By tradition they each had to wear a necklace strung with acorns from the new crop. So, I got a couple of paper grocery bags from my vehicle and helped them pick acorns from the trees. They were large green acorns because the trees were well watered. My memory is that we picked approximately ten pounds of acorns before they felt that was enough. They were so excited. They told me that their grandparents used to come to Simi Valley from Ventura each October to collect great quantities of acorns to use as food. Their joy seemed in part due to the fact that their acorns would be from Simi Valley.

Could these women have been descendants from the band of Indians who left Simi Valley to go to Ventura around 1879? Just why would those and the Willowbrook Lane Indians have returned each fall to Simi Valley to collect acorns? It may be because that during prehistoric times each extended family held rights to the acorns from specific oak trees and groves. Other families would be trespassing if they gathered acorns from "your trees." This may have meant that those Simi Valley Indians living in Ventura could not collect acorn in the Ventura area. That may be the reason that they returned to Simi Valley each fall. During the 1980s Indians of Chumash descent were unlikely to still be collecting acorns each year for food. However, it is possible that for these three women, collecting the acorns for their necklaces in Simi Valley, still had special significance simply because of a tradition passed down in their family. Whatever the event that they were referring to in which they had to wear necklaces made up of freshly gathered acorns from the new crop, it may have been a vestige of the *hutash* ceremony, which honored the Earth Goddess, who was the source of all food. The ceremony was of thanksgiving and held immediately after the acorn harvest.

So, our world is forever in transition. The paths of human kind through our world continues down through time - forever connected. Bud Taylor was a contemporary of that band of Chumash Indians, which lived in "Spring Canyon." Johnny Varble, who I knew, knew Bud Taylor. There were and, no doubt, are descendants of that last band of Chumash Indians, who left Simi Valley around 1879, still living in the Ventura area and probably elsewhere. Our connectivity with the past is forever present, although it may seem to be more fragile with the passage of time.

Mike Kuhn

**ALL REGULARLY SCHEDULED HIKES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.  
CHECK THE WEBSITE at <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> FOR UPDATES.**

### **Sunday Evening - Rocky Peak Fire Road**

During Daylight Savings Time meet at **5PM** and during Standard Time meet at **4PM** at the Rocky Peak Fire Road trailhead on the northern side of the Rocky Peak exit from the 118 Freeway. Take the Rocky Peak exit on the 118 Freeway and head north over the freeway. Park at the trailhead or across the bridge on the Santa Susana Pass Road. (Strenuous - 4.95 MRT - 1,325' elevation gain).

### **Tuesday Evening - Mt. McCoy Trail**

During Daylight Savings Time meet at **6PM** in the parking lot, located to the south of Donut Delite, near the NE corner of Madera and Royal. There is no hike during Standard Time.

(Moderate - 3.07 MRT - 600' elevation gain)

### **Thursday Evening - Chumash Trail**

During Daylight Savings Time meet at **6PM** at Chumash trailhead. Directions: Take the 118 Freeway to Yosemite exit. Go north on Yosemite and turn right on Flanagan Dr. The trailhead is at the north end of Flanagan Drive.

(Moderate to Strenuous - 5.4 MRT - 1300' total elevation gain.)

Due to unforeseen circumstances, all activities are subject to change without notice.  
Please see <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> for event details and the most up-to-date schedule.



## RSTB Calendar April 2020



ALL REGULARLY SCHEDULED HIKES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.  
CHECK THE WEBSITE at <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/> FOR UPDATES.

| Sun          | Mon | Tue                                   | Wed                                 | Thu                                | Fri                                        | Sat |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----|
|              |     |                                       | 1                                   | 2<br>Happy Birthday<br>Jesse Wolfe | 3                                          | 4   |
| 5            | 6   | 7                                     | 8<br>Happy Birthday<br>Louise Pomes | 9<br>Passover starts               | 10<br>Happy Birthday<br>Allison<br>Cameron | 11  |
| 12<br>Easter | 13  | 14<br>Happy Birthday<br>Cliff Cameron | 15<br>Happy Birthday<br>John Sabol  | 16<br>Passover ends                | 17                                         | 18  |
| 19           | 20  | 21                                    | 22<br>Earth Day                     | 23                                 | 24<br>Arbor Day<br>Ramadan starts          | 25  |
| 26           | 27  | 28                                    | 29                                  | 30                                 |                                            |     |

**SANTA ANA WILDFIRE THREAT INDEX** - Provides a 6 day forecast of Santa Ana Winds Wildfire Threats on a color coded map  
<https://fsapps.nwcg.gov/psp/sawti/>

**CALIFORNIA FIRE WEATHER MAP** - Provides actual Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches  
<https://www.fire.ca.gov/programs/communications/red-flag-warnings-fire-weather-watches/> (Scroll down to map)

\* Not within the jurisdiction of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.

No dogs allowed on trail(s). For additional information on hikes/work parties, contact the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District at 805-584-4400. **Special Note:** On all hikes and work parties, bring water and wear lug-soled boots.

**Full descriptions of these hikes and activities are available at** <https://www.simitrailblazers.com/calendar/>



-----cut out and return with your payment-----

**MEMBERSHIP**

Please enroll me as a New ( ) or Renewing ( ) member of the Rancho Simi Trail Blazers for the annual donation fee of

Single.....\$10     Family.....\$15

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Family memberships: Please list names and birthdays of additional family members (Month & Day Only)

Phone (provide up to two numbers): work/home/cell \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletters are distributed by email only. Contact the Membership Chair if you require a copy by US mail.

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about the RSTB? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make out tax deductible member donation check for the year to:  
Rancho Simi Foundation and mail it to RSTB, P.O. Box 1231, Simi Valley, CA 93062**

| <b>Rancho Simi Trailblazers</b>                 |                         |                   |                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>A Division of the Rancho Simi Foundation</i> |                         |                   |                                                                                              |
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| Treasurer:                                      | To Be Announced         |                   |                                                                                              |
| Park District Liaison:                          | Nikki Collier           | WK (805) 584-4453 | <a href="mailto:volunteers@rsrpd.us">volunteers@rsrpd.us</a>                                 |
| Work Parties Chair:                             | <b>VOLUNTEER NEEDED</b> |                   | <b>Contact Mike Kuhn at: 805-583-2345</b>                                                    |
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